



*Blended 2018*



# The Literary Arts Magazine of Olympic College



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## **SUNSET AT THE MARINA - *Vivian Bengé***

Melodic notes glide  
upon the air waves  
playing  
intimately  
within me.  
Songs soar simply,  
polarizing  
and uniting  
breathlessly  
enticing;  
sweetly  
I sing



**A STROLL THROUGH ZURICH** - *Vivian Benge*



The fairy village was almost complete, she could feel the excitement rising as potential energy built. The finishing touch and the ghostly forms alighted, waltzing around arm in arm or flitting singly about their twilight home. It was magic and she was thrilled that it had worked again. Less startled than the first time, grateful the deliberate action to provide a means for trade between her two towns had worked.

This time she'd known to have a baker, candle and soap maker, a tanner and an inn complete with beer brewery. Now the tea partiers could restock their cakes, the hunter could wash the blood from his clothes and the medicine woman could have a drink. They could all use new undergarments, even if they were going to be leather.

That's what she'd forgotten, a weaver and a seamstress. Could she get away with building that into one of the villages or would that disrupt the delicate harmonies that allowed the magic to persist? She hadn't wanted to take that risk before but now... Two were cute, but three was starting to look like an obsession.

This is already an obsession.

Toby the tom cat trotted up, staring avidly. Alice sighed, pushing away from cooling grasses.

"K, Cat; let's go get food."

Recognizing the human sound for the packaged goods he irrationally craved regardless of whatever hunted diet he managed on his own, his attention turned with her. Unnoticed, a part of her heart stayed with the frolicking fairies. A tinge sparked a reminder that she had wanted to make an appointment with her p.c.p.

Researching looms, spindles and fairy dust oscillated between preposterous and necessary. Buying the supplies to construct the models was embarrassing; she kept telling herself, in her head, that this hobby was gaining popularity. The subculture had an economic stronghold at the local craft store.

The fifth time she cried. No sobs racked her frame but the tears streaked both her cheeks like rain. She was already planning two more. The cat was sleeping at the neighbors.

The ninth was hard to finish as vision blurred behind salt water and gasps jerked her hands.

She told herself to stop after the twelfth; but the fairies waved directly to her, motioning for her to stay.

Something changed.

As she put the pieces together for the thirteenth place they got heavier. They seemed bigger. She almost couldn't pick up the last twig meant to hold a door in place.

As it set she realized it was taller than herself.

"Alice," the voice had a lilting, eerily familiar accent, "welcome."

He wasn't glowing so she almost didn't recognize him, despite his signature leather garb. "Hunter." Wonder echoed through their words.

From behind him stepped the wise woman with an acorn bowl held in her outstretched arms. What it held was glowing and radiated warmth. Alice recognized it immediately, despite having not missed it. Instinctively, her fingers arched toward what was an inherent part of her being.

"My heart." Pain and joy laced together until she didn't know what to feel more of.

"Be welcome; I don't recommend leaving without this again." They shared smiles. Alice's stomach growled. Hunter got a gleam in his eyes and the woman's lips pursed. "Would you like to look around for a while? If you go too far you'll end up back where you were before."

"Or you could stay and eat." Though he used fewer words, he said more than the former.

"I'm thirsty too."

They laughed.

She grinned sheepishly, feeling warm for the first time in months.



**SCORPIO** - *Daniel Chung*

Well, what can I say. I'm a 17 year old, I live in one of the hottest places, and I have no friends because of my job and family. Every day I wake up and go through all of the motions. Get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and go to work because of my low ranking job I am only a bridge attendant, "That will be two gold coins sir..." I drone on whenever someone comes by. I go home to my room to look in the mirror and see my face looking back at me with the same painful expression that I share, my icy blue eyes filled with hurt, anguish and an incurable hunger. After a bit more examination I see that it wouldn't hurt to gain a few pounds, because I am literally skin and bones, my butt length blood-red hair stands out against my black clothes and stark white complexion, giving me a very definable look. Afterwards, I get ready for night school, I change into my black hooded cape, black mini skirt, black tank top corset, and top off my outfit with black boots with both buckles and spikes that just looks amazing. I pack my school bag and get ready to catch the bus, to go to the one place where the shadow of my father is even bigger. "Oh you're his daughter! Well you should have a lot of potential, just go ahead and sit where ever you like." The one thing that every teacher says every year. With that, all of the students immediately hate me because of my last name and I get immediate brownie points with the teacher. I have no friends because they are afraid of my dad and I. each day is the same go to work, all of my classes, and go through all of the friendless days, and every day is the same thing. Day after day, every year.

The school I go to has two sets of classes, day school and night school. The day school has very strict rules, and dress code is modest, plain, and yikes ugh, then there's my school with no dress code and no rules. Hell, you could get away with murder. In my school everyone is amazingly hot but, I am expected to marry one particular hot guy, Emit. Emit is the most annoying guy IN the entire freaking world. Now don't get me wrong, he is everything I look for in a guy, and sadly more. He is just a bit taller than me, with dark black skater hair deep red uhhh, let's go with dreamy eyes that hide behind a pair of sunglasses therefore not noticed much, a very muscular body type, and dark complexion. My father is best friends with his father, and they are determined to have us be wed, I am not okay with that though. The only good side is that I am not a complete loner because of this arrangement, he is more or less forced to hang out with me to make our fathers happy with us. Now Emit's FEW good qualities are his dangerousness, his earlier mentioned hotness, his dark humor, and his aggressive behavior. However, Emit's personality is a deal breaker I go through all of the motions of liking him, and vise versa when our fathers are around but, once we are out of hearing range we fight like cats and dogs. I hope our fathers change their minds on our being wed.

Sorry, back on the topic of school. I don't know much about day school other than the fact that it is BORING. However, I do know a lot about night school given the fact that I go there. The classes are all the same as day school (I think) but ours are just a bit more, chaotic. The science teacher is a very open hearted man, meaning one, he has an open heart wound and two, he always has us dissecting anything he can get his hands on. Once he tried to dissect one of the other students haha that was a fun class period. Let's see, my math teacher is a scally old hag who makes school even more painful for everyone then it

already is. Except for me, when she read my name off the attendance list alongside Emit she practically started groveling in our shadow, that of course made him popular and me feared, Fuck my life. The language arts teacher is very quiet given that she is a mute. Our history teacher is a guy who might as well be dead and was in W.W.2. That is about it for our teachers, the rest are all extra curricular teachers and hardly come to school.

Well that is my school life and home life. I go through all of the same stuff almost every day and it's always a bore. After a long night at school I go back home via bus to stuff my face with as much food as I can and go to sleep. Then it starts over, work, school, home. sometimes though I will go and egg or mess with the day school students it's always fun but, I never get any credit for my hard core pranks its all ways, "Oh did you hear that Emit and Lillith egged the day school." grr I am always second and Emit is never even there, it is just assumed that Emit was there and it makes me mad as all hell. Even worse Emit just takes the all the credit without a word. Grrrrrrrr. Sorry did I mention that my full name is Lillith Hel Reaper and if you can't tell by my last name I am the daughter of the Grim Reaper or rather... death. I am 1700, I have pitch black wings that I hide under my cape, and I live in hell at the center of the earth. A few more things you should know is that my school is neither on or under the earth's surface, angels and other heavenly creatures attend day school, and all of us demonic creatures attended night school. Now if you don't mind I am going to bed.



## **COLORS** - *Avery Hoyt*



# IT REQUIRES OPPOSITES

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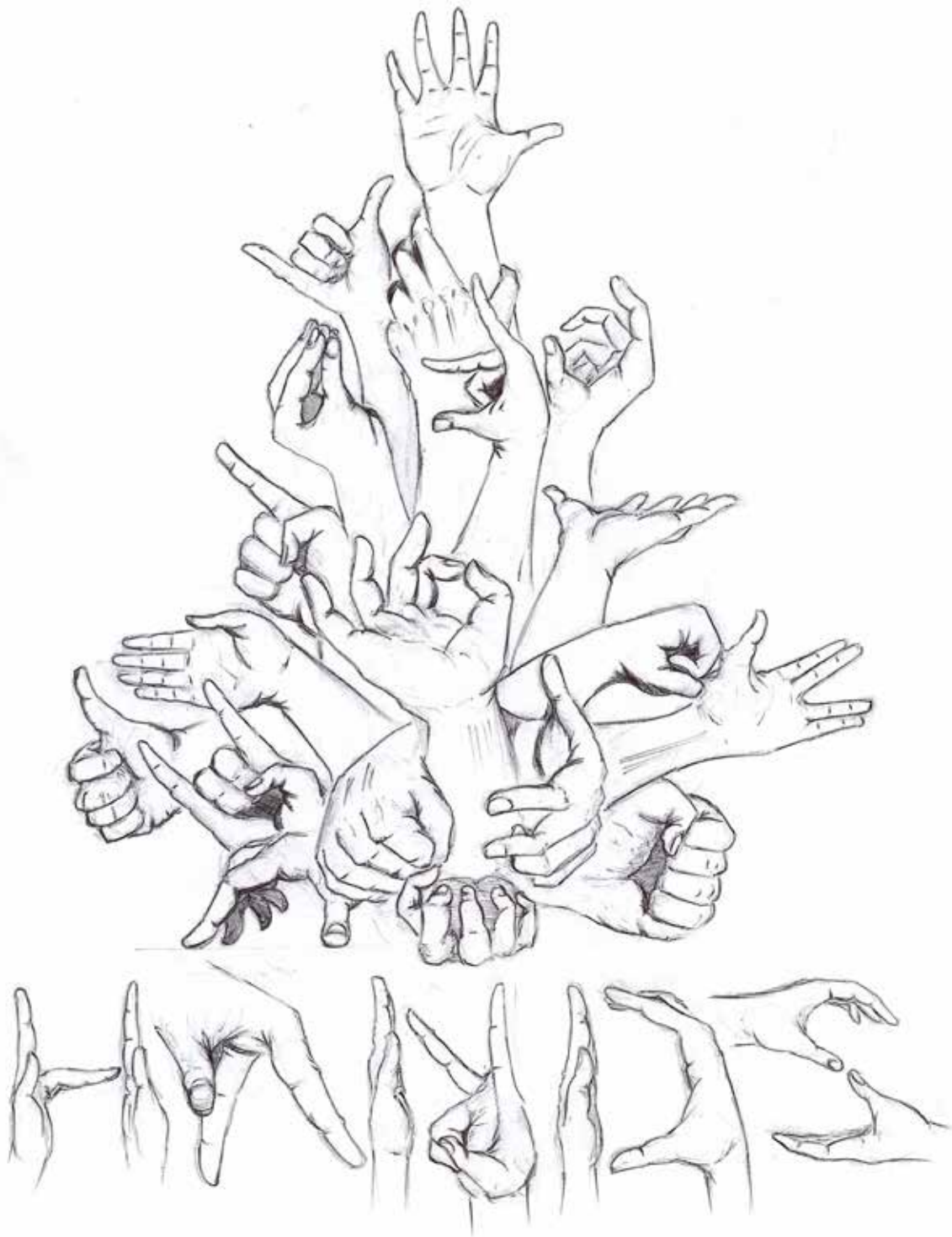
*Kira Sabini*

Can there be dark without light?  
Sorrow without joy?  
Wrong without right?

The physical transcends this dichotomy  
An orgasm is  
Pleasure without pain  
Clear skies without rain  
Bliss  
Beyond disharmony

The mind requires opposites  
Composite  
While I like it simple  
Why describe an opal?

It is what it is  
Like this



**HANDS** - *Daniel Chung*

# TEN LIMERICKS

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*Christina Calden*

## **Louis XIV**

There was a man named Louis who thrived.  
Oh, his divine right to rule revived.  
Center of the nation,  
Forging a foundation.  
Oh, the man who was the state did strive.

## **Oliver Cromwell**

As Cromwell owned religious outlooks,  
He learned to rule from the guidebooks.  
He formed his own army,  
For they were not sorry  
Of executing Charles I, as crooks.

## **Puritan Rule**

Oh, the rule that imposed our own Saints,  
That lived for no profaning complaints,  
Modest clothes were a must.  
And teachers to entrust.  
Puritan Rule came for the restraints.

## **"I Am The State"**

At the center, the sun does remain  
And the Sun King is the domain.  
He had an absolute monarchy  
And used Richelieu's autarky.  
Oh, Louis XIV was his only name.

## **Thomas Jefferson**

Oh, the Enlightenment whom inspires,  
A young man to develop desire  
In the people's visions -  
Aiming for decisions.  
Which our country will later acquire.

## **Social Contract**

People no longer lived for chastise.  
The government became organized,  
Freedom was minuscule,  
And rulers had all rule.  
Hoping to be Americanized.

## **Voltaire**

Oh, he defended freedom of speech  
And he was one who did care to preach.  
Opposed global inequality  
As he respected morality,  
He is imprisoned, yet still does breach.

## **Montesquieu**

Criticized absolute monarchy,  
Oh, he believed in all honesty.  
The parting of powers,  
And protecting by scours,  
Vying for a balanced policy.

## **Checks and Balances**

An act that holds from overpower,  
In which there is balance in power.  
Branches may oversee,  
But still at a degree.  
This prevents from the possible scour.

## **Salons**

A place where new ideas were made.  
Theories in which were to persuade.  
The social gatherings  
Are full of chattering  
And each time, poems came to upgrade.



**WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE** - *Alexandra Fetters*

My home is a cardboard box  
In an alley, it sits waiting for me, hidden from onlookers  
It contains my life  
All my treasures within  
It shelters me from the cold winds and the blowing rain.

My kitchen is a dumpster  
Where I can wait for the garbage to be taken out  
So I can loot to find my dinner  
Others throw away what I learn to live on.  
I dine on the edibles that others don't want.

My bathroom is a state park  
Where I sneak in then no one is looking  
The water falls on me and running down my body helps me to feel worthy  
Worthy to be alive, worthy to have a home.

My Church is my heart  
I am ashamed to go into a church  
I fear that they will judge me.  
I judge myself

My future is unknown to me  
I can't seem to look past the down and out that I am going through now.  
I want to believe that I deserve to have a home and a family.  
I want to know in my heart that this will end one day.  
But when?



**FACES - Daniel Chung**



Like the rain, I fell for you. I fell fast, hard, and without thought. It felt natural yet spontaneous all at once. Your eyes always captured me. They were a closed book, shutting out the world and the hate. I delved deeper and opened the mysterious book and I read a chapter. I fell in love with the chapter, without finishing the book.

We started as strangers. Unknowing to the challenges to come, we exchanged greetings. Then we discussed lessons. In the end, we talked about everything. Your voice never let me sleep. You were always on my mind. You had always surprised me. You surprised me by caring. You took care of me and protected me from others and myself. Year after year, drama after drama, and we never left each other's side. Time flew by faster than I would have liked. We graduated middle school together. We parted our ways. You began to change. E-mail after e-mail with no response. Yet when I saw you, you always seemed overjoyed to see me. Why did you have to be so confusing?

And then you responded. You responded with pent up bitterness and in the process, you tore my heart apart with every word I read. You told me I was to blame for your suicidal thoughts. You told me I was never your friend. Even when I stood up for you and protected you from the cruel world. I stood by you when no one else did, I never left your side, or talked behind your back. You told me I was useless. You told me I didn't care even though it was the biggest lie. I cried night after night, I didn't know how to make it right. So, I left. And once again we were strangers.



**MT. RAINIER SUNRISE** - *Anthony Estes*

The human experience is an amazing thing. When something bad or good happens, sometimes we don't know why, but we never saw it coming.

It all started as darkness and I only had slight memory of what happened. I opened my eyes and tried to remember, but it was such a chore. I felt so exhausted and even breathing felt like too much. I couldn't hear anything. It was like someone was cupping their hands over my ears and every sound was muffled. I think someone was talking to me, but I couldn't be sure. I couldn't see anyone in front of me. Now that my vision had finally focused, I could see I was sitting in a car. The high beams were on and pointing directly on some dry bushes and dirt. My vision seemed a little slanted... wait no, the car was slanted. I was on a hill. My hearing slowly came back to me now. The windshield wipers were moving back and forth, and the car's signal sound was getting louder and louder.

My head started to pound, and I couldn't take the sounds anymore. Without notice of the blood across my legs and the papers all sprawled around the car, I reached for the door handle and got out. As soon as my feet touched the dirt and I stood there, I lost all memory again. I looked at the car in distraught. This car was so badly mangled and I all I could think was, "Who's car is this? I hope whoever was in this accident made it out alive." I was so oblivious to the fact that I had just got out of the car and it was me who was in this accident. I lost who I was. I didn't know who I was or who I belong to. I didn't know how old I was or if I had a family. I was just being.

I slowly dragged my feet with me as I walked around the car to examine it and stopped at the driver's door. An overwhelming amount of exhaustion took over my body and my chest suddenly felt so heavy. I rested my head on my folded arms on top of the car and my eyes followed the windshield wipers. Then I heard a voice. Someone said my name. I looked up and there, on the other side of the car, was a familiar face looking at me with sad eyes. The instant I saw him I knew who I was. This was my husband. He looked concerned and kept saying my name. He said a few things to me, but I couldn't comprehend them. His mouth was moving, but I could only get bits and pieces like a broken radio. I needed to lay down. Standing was too much. I looked at him and reached my hand out towards him, across the top of the car. I looked at him and said, "I love you." He didn't take my hand and looked at me in defeat. He yelled, "No! You don't get to say that! This isn't goodbye! Don't you say that!" My hand went limp and slid down the windshield. I blacked out, opened my eyes to see the windshield wipers nudging my hand repetitively, and blacked out again.

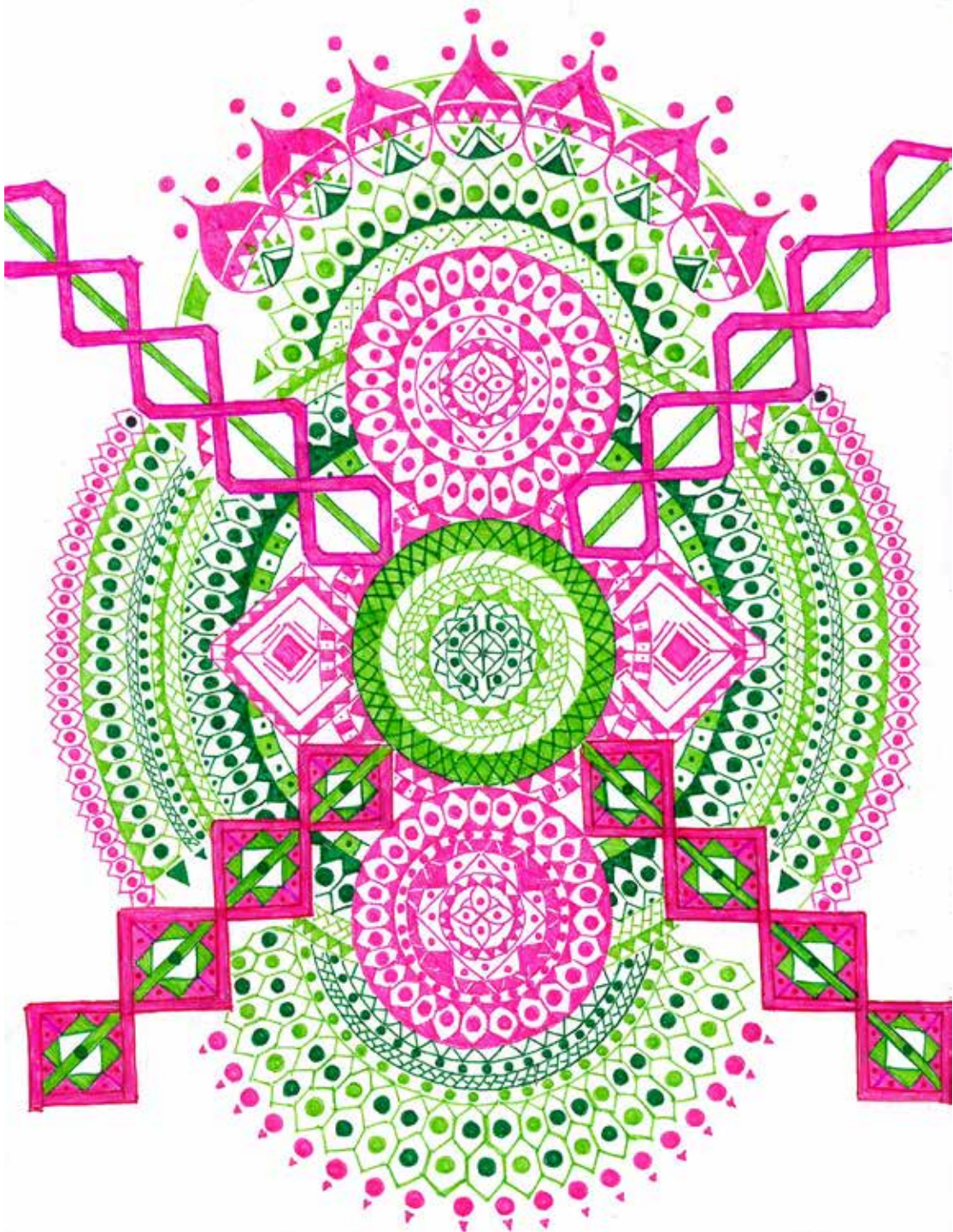
A scent of sweet Californian dirt consumed me, and I felt rocked into a deep slumber. The feeling I had was surreal. I was floating in a bed of clouds and I had never felt so much comfort. Everything surrounding my body was soft and cushioned. There were sun rays warming my skin and I felt truly at peace. I could stay right where I was forever. I was happy.

A small sound from a distance was pinging at me. I started to feel confused and really tried to listen. "ELISHA!" I jolted awake and every inch of my body burned with a sharp pain, from the top of

my head to my toes. I felt ripped from the soft clouds and found myself on the hard, rocky dirt, laying between some extremely dry and brittle bushes. From a very far distance I could hear my husband's voice yelling my name. He was so far away, and fear consumed me. I screamed back to him inside, but when

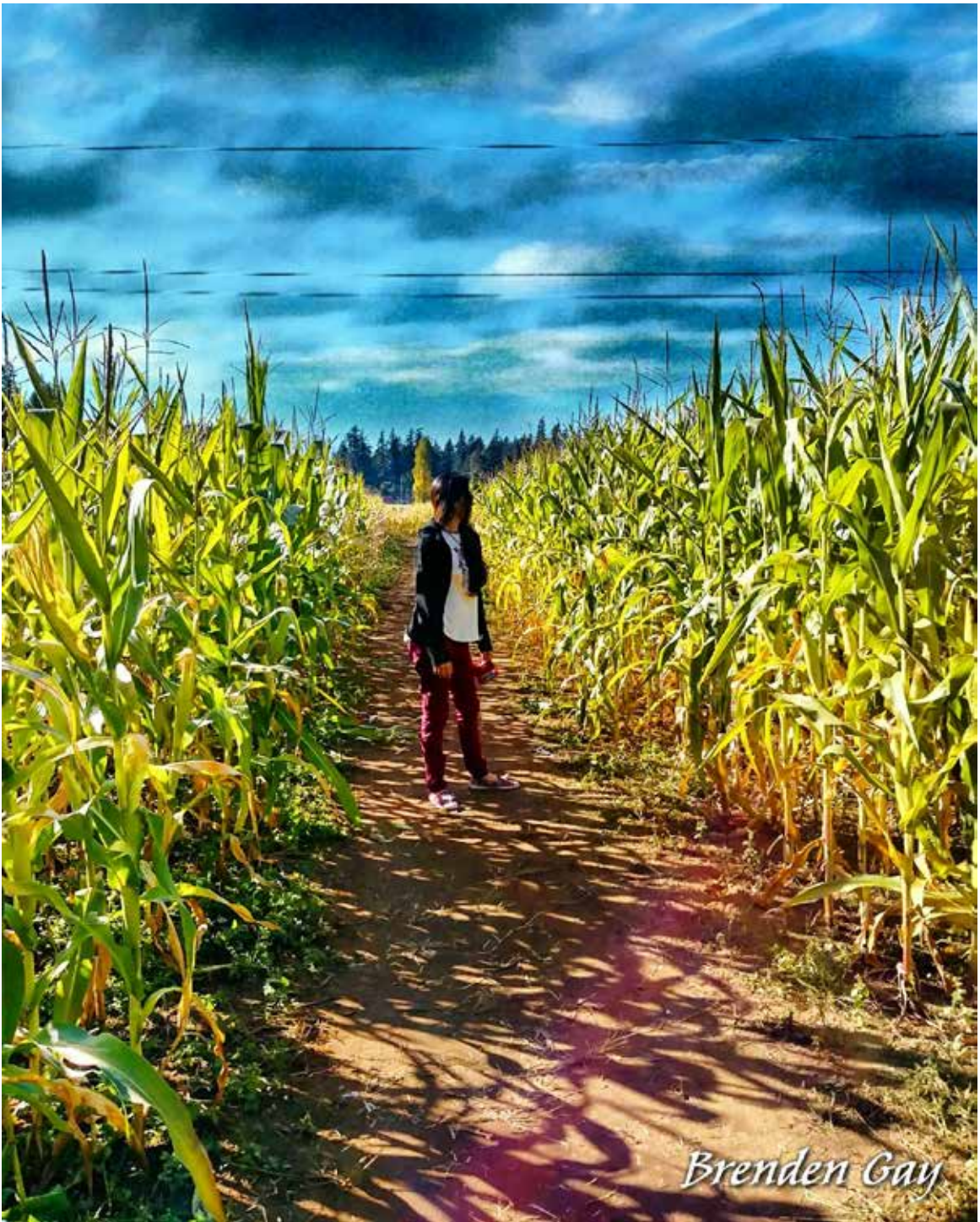
I went to take a deep breath in, to project my voice it felt like someone had stuck a dagger in my chest. I couldn't breathe. I began to weep and scream on the inside. "Where was he?! Did he leave me?! Am I lost?! Can anyone find me?! HELP!" So many questions were racing through my head and all I could do was lay right where I was.

I blacked out again for a long time. This time I woke again, but in a bright, white room. I heard mumbling and felt someone pulling at my lip. I blinked a couple times and looked up. A man wearing a mask over his mouth was stitching up my lip. I looked down and another person was cutting my clothing off and putting a gown on me. I looked to my left and there my husband was laying. I had never seen his eyes with such sorrow. He was intently looking at me with a furrowed brow and said, "Elisha, I'm so sorry." They then wheeled him out of the room. My eyes followed him until everything went dark again.



**DRAGON FRUIT MANDALA** - *Daniel Chung*





**THE OWL IN THE MAZE - *Brenden Gay***





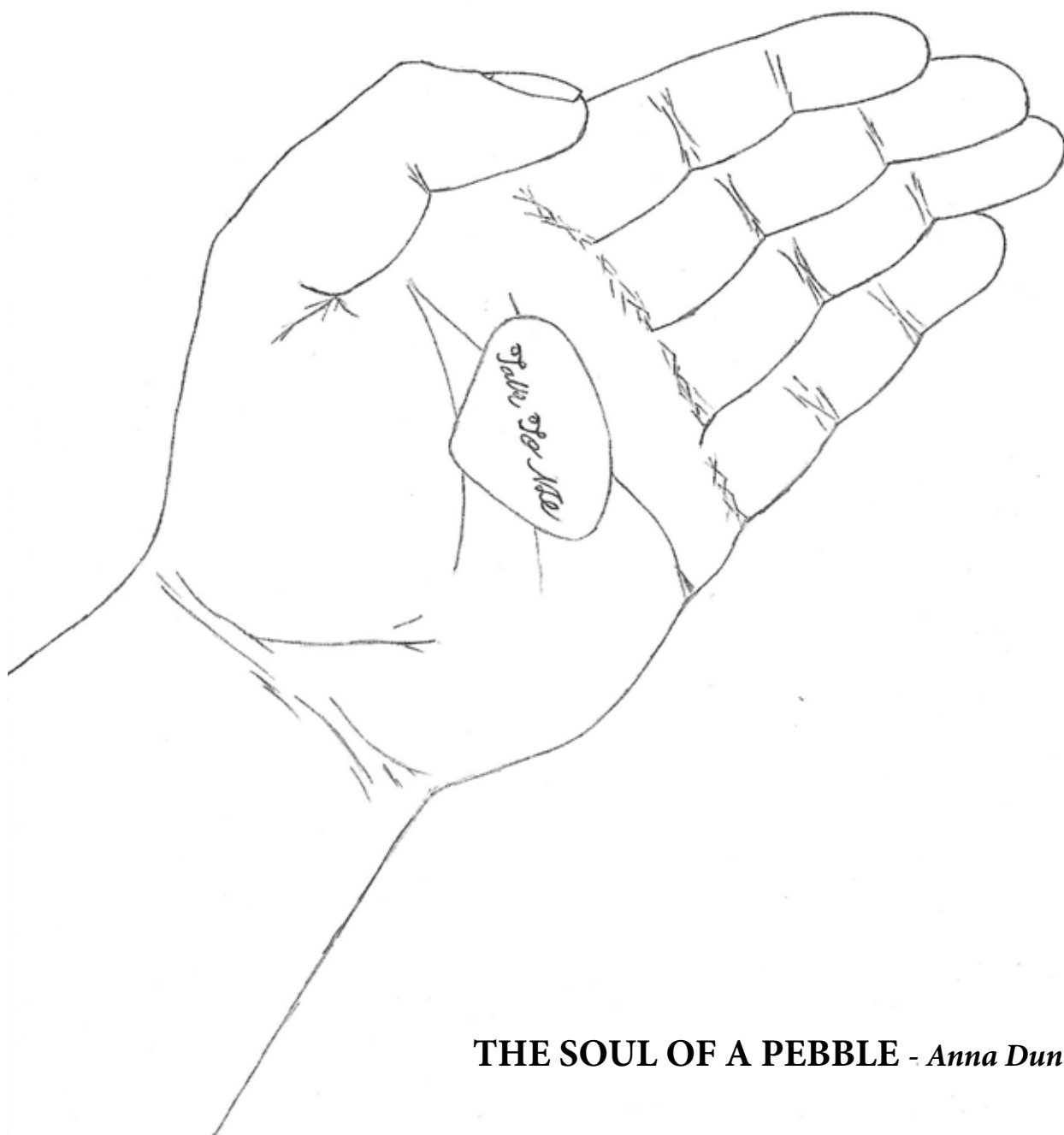
**BARN OWL - *Gretchen Lund***

Digital Painting



**WINTER WATERS - *Vivian Bengé***

Shimmering cascades rippling past  
The river gives the impression  
    This summer will last  
Running to keep up, skipping stones across  
    Spent time unlost  
Seasoned waves lapping shores on both sides  
Reasoning glaciers melt, rains pelt, and waters fall and rise  
    The solar concession  
Seen by stardusted eyes



**THE SOUL OF A PEBBLE - *Anna Dunbar***

Once upon a time there was a girl lost in a forest of whispering trees. They whispered to each other and to the universe around them, but, though the girl could hear them she was too far below to speak back. The girl had been alone in this forest for a long time never knowing which way to turn and never seeing another soul.

Then, one day after walking for a long time, she stumbled over a root and fell. When she opened her eyes she saw, on the ground in front of her nose, a pebble. And on this pebble in the smallest but most beautiful calligraphy was written, “talk to me.” The girl had not spoken for a long time and try as she might she didn’t know what to say. But she picked up the pebble anyway and walked along, wondering what would interest a pebble. She began by speaking of what she saw and what she felt, repeating snippets she heard from the trees and memories she had of her wanderings. Before she knew it she was pouring her heart out to this little pebble, and it made her feel less alone.

As she walked around with the pebble in her hand she noticed that the pebble had changed, it was still the same pebble but warmer and bigger. Still, in the smallest but most beautiful calligraphy was written, “talk to me” but on the other side the words, “you are kind” had appeared. The girl had not been spoken to in a long time, and even if she could not hear the little rock she knew it was listening to her. This made the girl very happy. So she closed her hand around her little rock and continued to walk and talk. She spoke of what she saw and what she felt, she shared snippets from the trees, she told the rock memories that she had, and she delved into her thoughts on philosophy and nature. She poured her heart out to this little rock, and it made her feel less alone.

She wandered through the woods and spoke for a long time before she opened her hand to look at her little rock. When she did, she saw that it had gotten bigger once more. Still, on one side in the smallest but most beautiful calligraphy was written, “talk to me”, but now on the other it not only said, “you are kind” but also, “you are clever.” At first this made the girl smile for she was a clever little girl to have lived so long in this forest. But after a moment she got upset, “what do you know about me? You are just a little stone! You cannot speak so you surely cannot understand how alone I truly am! What is cleverness and kindness when you are so very alone?” She threw the stone away and ran a few steps before she looked back at this small warm stone. She was not alone, she thought, if she had this little stone. So she returned to the stone and brushed off the dirt which it had gathered then set out once more off into the forest. She spoke of all she saw and felt, what she heard from the trees and remembered from her past, she delved into the depths of her mind and spoke to the stone for a long time. She poured her heart out to the stone, and it made her feel less alone.

She continued in this manner for a very long time until the stone grew so big she could no longer carry it. So, she set the stone down and told it, “I will set off once more and I will remember all I see and feel and hear and think of. Then when I have walked a long way, I will return and tell you all of it.” So she set off in a straight line away from the stone and she looked around her and she listened to the trees, she thought of many memories and began many new ideas. Then after a long time, she turned around and returned to her stone. She laid down next to it and talked deep into the night of everything she

remembered from that day. Eventually she fell asleep smiling, for she did not feel at all alone.

She awoke the next morning to see her stone had grown once more. What was once the smallest pebble was now a boulder, and still on it, in the smallest but most beautiful calligraphy was written, “talk to me.” She smiled and got up and once again wandered away from her bolder to find things that she could tell it. She saw and heard and remembered and thought, then returned to her bolder and spoke long into the night. She fell asleep with a smile on her face, not once that day had she thought she was alone.

She continued in this way for a long time and everyday what was once a pebble got bigger and bigger. Some days she simply climbed onto her bolder and stared at the sky telling it all she thought and heard, she explained all the clouds she saw and the shapes they took, she spoke of mythology and human nature and everything that came to her mind.

She was very happy when she was thinking of what she would tell her bolder. She was happy talking to it and she was happy remembering all the time she had spent with it. She spent days wandering and nights talking.

Until one day she woke up and she saw in the smallest but most beautiful calligraphy, “climb me.” She looked up at her bolder and saw that after all this time it had grown so large that it reached above the trees! Her pebble was a mountain waiting for her to climb. And climb she did. She reached the tops of the trees which whispered and passed them without stopping to speak she climbed until she could almost touch the clouds she had described to her pebble. Then she turned and looked out over the forest. The trees stretched out past the horizon in every direction and she realized something.

The girl realized that she was never truly lost in this forest. She looked down at her pebble which had grown so large and she knew that she was not lost. She simply hadn’t known what she was looking for. She knew now that while she was happy, she would always be home.





**SUMMER COLORS** - *Alexandra Feters*



## TIDE POOLS - *Anthony Estes*

As I run, to escape my life, to free myself of the things that remind me of those I have lost, I find myself back here again. On this path, my path. Here, I can see the sunrise, feel the crisp morning sea breeze. Here, I feel at peace. Catching my breath, I see the lightly padded earth of the trail obstructed by the foliage from the annual autumnal shedding. I hear the chirping of birds, the buzzing of the insects, all in sync with the slowing of my pulse. This connection with nature, makes dealing with the troubling emotions brought on by the anniversary of my mother's death all the more bearable.

My mother was a kind woman, never cared for much other than my happiness, her only child. She would bring me here often as she knew that running was one of my favorite things to do. It might have also been an easy and cheap way for her to spend time with me and for me to exert my energy. Which is why I always find myself here out of pure instinct, on the path to our secret area. A place that is out of sight of the town, but not far enough away to not hear the echoed cries of traffic as it is home to the abandoned light house. We always come here to watch the ships pass by on their way to the harbor in the next town over as we eat the food she prepared for us. father would join us on occasion as he had a rare day off running his law firm. That was until that day, the she died.

It was a day like any other, my mother was preparing the picnic area while my father and I were playing Frisbee in the field. I missed the throw and it flew into lighthouse. As I ran to go retrieve it my father yelled at me not to as it was dangerous, but I couldn't hear him as I was focused on retrieving the Frisbee. It was then that it happened. While I was in the keeper's room, guided by pure maternal instincts my mother darted inside after me.

"Kei, where are you!?"

"Upstairs"

"Don't move I'm coming up"

"But, I'm already on my way down"

As I was heading to the stairway, seeing my mother treading lightly testing to see if it would hold her weight, I slipped. My mother moved faster than I had ever seen her move before. My mother had tripped up the stairs, broke the railing, and fell to her death. The sound she made when she hit the ground, I could never forget it in my life. My father was never the same after this

I find myself before the lighthouse frozen in fear my mind going back to that day.

\*Veeer Veeert\*. The ringing of my phone brings my mind back to the present.

“Hello?”

“Finally, I’ve been calling for hours. Why haven’t you answered your phone?”

“Sorry, just lost track of time.”

“You need to pay more attention. Do you even know what time it is? I was about ready to send out a search party.”

“I know, I know.”

“You were at the lighthouse again weren’t you?”

“.....”

“Damn it, Kei! I told you to never go near that place again!”

“Why are you always like this?! You know how much this place means to us!”

“I don’t want to hear it. Just hurry home, dinner is getting cold.”

“But...”

“Don’t but me, look I’m not mad. I just can’t bear to lose you like your mother.”

“I know, Dad. See you when I get home, Love you.”

“Love you too.”

My mother’s death has been difficult on my father. They had a special bond and it changed him. He used to be such an outgoing guy, now he is more reserved and has gotten protective over me. He mostly keeps to himself, unless it is to dote on me. That fact hasn’t changed; I would even say he does it more now than when she was still alive.

A week passed and I couldn’t stop myself from coming back here. I had been avoiding the area as a way to appease my father’s worries, but I still can’t stay away for long. My connection to the place is deep. Here my mind is at ease. My train of thought is interrupted by a stranger.

“Hello there” the stranger says waving her hand.

I force out a weak reply as I tense up unable to deal with a stranger invading our place.

“I’m new in town. Someone was talking about how there was a light house in town, and I was curious. So, here I am. Though, I am slightly disappointed about the state it’s in. Being run down like that someone might hurt themselves.”

I hold my tongue. Searching for a way to change the topic. “Not many people come up here, you know.

This place has a lot history. The town was founded around this light house, and yet, they forget it's even here. It's been left here to rot after the harbor dried up, and business moved to the next town where they built a new light house. No need for redundancies."

"Sad really, you would think the town would take pride in something like this."

"Obviously that isn't the case."

"Anyway, what's your name?"

"Kei. Yours?"





**MT. RAINIER** - *Alex Dunbar*

I woke with a gasp as a searing knife of pain wrenched me from sleep. “God please, not again,” I thought, trying desperately to catch my breath. My eyes flicked to the clock on the night stand- 3 a.m. The quiet of early morning was punctuated by the droning of Tony’s snores as he drooled on the pillow next to me. Sirius, our lab mutt, snorted in harmony on the floor. I bit the pillow to muffle my cries as a bolt of hot fire shot down my left side. Though I was careful not to disturb his slumber, part of me yearned to kick my husband awake and demand that he hold me through the pain. To make him witness my suffering.

My heart pounded in my chest as panic set in. “I can’t breathe. OH SHIT, I can’t breathe!” My diaphragm spasmed, knocking the wind out of me like an elephant sitting on my chest. One shallow breath at a time, I proceeded through the careful steps of the ritual that had carried me through so many nights: pillows propping me upright to take the weight off my spine, tears streaming down my cheeks as I willed air into my lungs.

“Should I take a Vicodin? Can I wear off the effects before the alarm sounded at 6:30? Will I feel hung over all day?” I argued with myself over my options as a familiar sense of self-loathing crept in. I was pathetic.

The symptoms of strange illnesses and pain appeared out of nowhere in my teenage years. Some days I could hardly stand, let alone walk or drive a car. The look of judgment darkened on my teachers’ faces as missed school days mounted. I gave up hopes for college and adopted a “screw it” attitude, focusing instead on perfecting my bong hit. I might as well just be the slacker they expected me to be.

This mantra followed me into my twenties, as the pain worsened with each year. Medical tests revealed nothing and the doctors could only scratch their heads and prescribe drugs to help mitigate the pain. My pain became my story. My prison. It was all I had ever been- all I ever would be.

The only person who really understood my struggle was my dad. We were hewn from the same tree, driving my mother crazy with our similarities and stubbornness. I had been his tiny shadow since birth,



placing my feet in every giant bootstep and soaking up his colorful tales of dragons, wizards and faeries, rapt with wonder.

“It’s our ancestral curse,” Daddy told me, the storyteller’s twinkle in his eye. “At some point in the history of the Marsch Clan, someone angered a demon. It has afflicted us with its scourge for generations and will continue to do so until the end of our line.”

As time went by, Dad’s myth about the demon became real. He had retired early, planning to spend his sixties on the road photographing Washington’s wilderness. But his dream slipped away as his fight with the mysterious illness consumed him. His hair turned shock white as he shrank from a giant’s stature of 6’2” to that of a 5’5” hunchback seemingly overnight. I was held in the invisible restraints of my own traitorous body, watching the defeat of my hero as the beast devoured my father alive.

Dad’s diagnosis came in due course: Ankylosing Spondylitis. The rampant inflammation of the disease had fused his spine forward into a question mark. The demon had been named.

We clung to our optimism that Dad would respond to treatment with immune suppressants.

“I can finally have my husband back!” Mom confided her hopes to me. She began to allow herself to dream again about spending retirement together RVing across the state.

Visions of misty mountains and crashing coast lines quickly faded from Mom’s eyes as she realized Dad had accepted the diagnosis as his excuse to give up the fight. Mom was sentenced instead to act as his caregiver for the short remainder of his life, while he settled into the morphine fog.

Dad’s doctors had warned that if he didn’t make the effort to move his spine, his organs could begin to fail and his lungs could collapse under the strain of his heavy body. Frustrated with his weakness, I screamed at him, “Get up! Go outside! LIVE!” But he just stared back with increasingly vacant eyes as he sunk deeper and deeper into his Lazy Boy.

I put off seeking confirmation of my own diagnosis and stuffed my fears into the deepest recesses of my mind. All it would take to know for sure was a test for the genetic marker. I had done my research and was fully aware that early treatment and a healthy lifestyle could mean the difference between life and

death. But I had no energy for being proactive. All I wanted to do was pull the covers over my head and wait for the nightmare to end. I'd call the doctor next week...or maybe next month...

When the blow of Dad's death finally came, my whole world shattered. My daddy was gone. My giant. My hero. The slap of reality reverberated through my entire being. I was staring at the crystal ball of my future. I felt abandoned. But more than anything, I was pissed. He had quit on me.

"I HATE YOU A.S!" I wanted to scream. The damn disease had stolen the enjoyment of most of my life, had forced me to watch as it tortured my dad, had taken his life and was threatening to take mine. I could feel its claws trying to pull me into the grave after him. As if a switch had been turned on inside me, I funneled my anger, fear and grief into determination. To hell with this demon, it couldn't have me!

My diagnosis of Ankylosing Spondylitis was confirmed just six weeks after Daddy's passing. In the aftershock of my loss, my life had a sudden clarity, as if a shroud had been lifted. I loved and admired my father, but I did not need to repeat his fate. I would be the one to end the curse of the Marsch Clan. If I wanted to survive, I had to pull my head out of my ass and choose to live.

"Go backpacking with me." Tony begged, a week after my diagnosis. "Distract yourself. You're going to wake up in pain no matter where you are, so it might as well be somewhere with a view."

So once again, I embraced my "screw it" attitude, but this time with a new focus.

Over the past year and a half, I've slayed dragons bigger than I ever imagined. I've run two 5K races and hiked for seven days straight, backpacking across the Olympic Mountain range.

As I hike, I take note of the gradual easing of my back and ribs. I drink in each breath, tasting the earthy tang of the mountain air. To breathe again is glorious! The meditative movement of my body and the energy of the forest is medicine for my soul. The trail is my therapy.

I hear Daddy's stories in the chatter of rushing rivers. I can see his smile in the Greenman that hides in every tree. And I can feel his freedom in the rhythm of every step. I find solace for my broken heart in the wilds of the backcountry, as he had dreamed he would do some day,

I sleep through most nights now, though I can still feel the tightness in my ribs first thing in the morning or after a sedentary day. I curse the demon each week as I inject myself with poison to keep my immune system from attacking itself. Each morning presents me with a choice: will I succumb to my familiar or embrace the unknown journey of living?



**ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR ART -**  
*Kohl Vanhorn*



I don't remember much about my childhood, but I'll never forget one event. It happened in a small town in Visaya Province in Balintawak, Negros Occidental, Island of the Philippines.

On October 7, 1970, I was only six years old when super typhoon Kate hit without warning. My father was not around. He was working in Bacolod City, so we faced the heavy rain and strong winds without him.

While we were sleeping, around midnight, a huge gust of wind ripped the roof off our house. "Get up!" shrieked my mother.

"Where to, Mama?" I asked.

"Somewhere safe. Grab your sister. Hurry."

"I can't see, Mama."

She handed me a flash light that kept turning on and off. The battery was low but it was enough to get us out of the house. Scared and confused, we walked out to the street in front of the house, only to find we were heading into water where the street was. My mother was carrying my seven-month old baby brother while she was grabbing my right hand. I was carrying my two-year old sister. As we were about to step into the water, my mother said, "Don't let go. Hang on tight," with the voice of fear I had never heard. We waded in waist high water that flooded the street, and just then, with the force of the moving water pushing on us, my hand broke free from my mother's grip, and my sister and I found ourselves drifting away from her.

"Help! Somebody help us!" I screamed as loud as I could, but no one came to save us. I called for my mother but she did not answer either.

I lifted my sister and put her on my back. Then she asked, "Are we going to die?"

Shaken and terrified, I said, "Keep your arms around my neck and don't let go no matter what." The water by then was up to my nose and my feet barely touched the ground. I closed my eyes and hoped this was only a dream and soon I would wake up, but it wasn't a dream. Hopeless and tired, I closed my eyes and took what I thought was my last breath of air.

With my head completely underwater and my little sister's arms still around my neck as I was

sinking, I prayed that we would survive. Then, I felt my feet touching the ground again. Gasping for air, I quickly moved my feet to get to the shallower water.

To my surprise, we didn't drown. Both shivering, we held each other closely, with me trying to comfort her in any way I could. I whispered into her ear, "Close your eyes and go to sleep. I will be right here, and will never let you go." As I stood in the water up to my waist, leaning against a banana tree trunk, it was pitch-dark all around us, while we listen to the horrifying sounds of the wind and rain, hoping for this to end. We waited for someone to rescue us.

When it was finally day light, the rain had stopped and a clear sky appeared. Flood water from the rain and rising tide (combination of sea water and the typhoon rains) was rushing back to the ocean. Amid the destruction and fallen trees, people's voices could be heard, searching for their loved ones. I was listening for my mother's voice, but I only heard unfamiliar voices. I started crying, wondering if I would ever see her again. Then I heard her voice.

"Nene, Nene, where are you?"

I screamed, "We are here, Mama!"

We ran towards her through the receding water and deep mud, and said, "Mama, you found us."

"Yes, I'm here, my children."

In her arms was my seven -month old baby brother sound asleep. Nothing was said after that. Tired and hungry but relieved at finding each other, we didn't have a house to go back to, so we stayed at the church for shelter until the area was safe and secure. We waited for the emergency rations that were supplied by the men in military uniforms that included instant milk, rice, sardines, bread and water.

Super typhoon Kate took over 613 souls, one being my teacher, and 284 others who were listed as missing when it struck on that October day in 1970. I thought I was going to be one of them, expecting that I would drown. The whole town was devastated and broken, the powerful winds and water destroying homes and power lines. But one thing I know, there must have been a guardian angel among us, guiding me and my whole family to safety, and, unlike many of our neighbors, none of us were injured.





**MADISON FALLS - *Jonah & Joseph Criswell***





**BANALATA** - *Gretchen Lund*

# HEART BROKEN, BUT DRESSED

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*Kira Sabini*

Wind swirls  
Twirling, twining around my legs  
Up my skirt  
Down the collar of my shirt

Blushing  
Rushing to undo the show  
Even though  
No one sees, I'm alone

No romantic gaze  
Raising my heart rate

Surrounded by jealousy  
And selfish desire

I'm tired  
Missing a love  
That expired



**MADISON FALLS - *Jonah & Joey Criswell***



# THE HOLOCAUST: THE ULTIMATE ANTI-SEMANTIC ACT ———

*Jehuda Zabari*

My name is Aaron. I live in a village called Ramat Hadar near Tel-Aviv.

I built my house with my own hands, but I have not always lived here. I remember that day visiting my cousin in Berlin in 1941. It was the Passover, a big Jewish holiday. We were so happy and had a big meal together all around a long table celebrating the Passover Seder. As we prayed for the matzah and were about to eat, I heard a knock on the door. We tried to ignore it, but they broke through the door and came in, pulling out a list. They were the Nazis. Because I was born and lived in Frankfurt in central Germany and was just visiting in Berlin, I was not on their list, so they let me go.

I returned home to Frankfurt late that night, for I had nowhere else to stay but back at our house. Everyone I knew had disappeared! I was told by my gentile neighbor that while I was gone, the Nazis had come and taken all my family and all the Jewish people to the nearby big soccer stadium. Unknowingly to me, they were later put on trucks and then onto cattle trains to be taken to the “Work camps.”

The next day I learned it had been reported to the Nazi's I had returned home. They came and took me as an eighteen-year-old young man to join the rest of the Jews in one of the many cattle trains on their way to these remote camps. The cattle train was overcrowded with people, and the Nazis struggled to close the doors. It was unbearably hot and I was sweating buckets. It was suffocating; I could barely breathe. As the cattle car reached the entrance of the camp, the first thing we saw was a sign welcoming us to the Treblinka, a labor prison concentration camp, with the slogan “Arbeit macht frei” on it. It was a German phrase that meant “Work sets you free.” Obviously, this was a complete lie, as I barely survived there. It was just one of their cruel “motivational” slogans. I know now there were never any plans to set anyone free in payment of their forced labor. At this point, however, I did not know they were death camps, as well as working camps. When the deportations began, myself and others with me, held the common belief this would be a temporary “resettlement” of the Jewish people.

In the camp, I was working long hours for days with little food, or water as slave labor. Many died on my left and right sides. It was horrible! All I could think about was how I could survive there. What

would keep me from going insane? I thought to myself, “Just keep going, keep working, and keep your head down.” The few who dared to open their mouth were considered rebels and were gunned down. The Nazis worked hard maintaining and manufacturing this fiction of a work camp. To the outside world, they reported that the Jews were being treated well. No one came for us; no one cared. I was left to die with no idea of what happened to the rest of my family. I felt hopeless.

Nearly two years of misery went by. Just when I thought it couldn’t get any worse, Hitler ordered the Final Solution to commence, and I was moved to the Auschwitz death camp. The gas chamber, which falsely posed as a shower room, was the largest room in the Crematorium. Next to this room stood the ovens, which were used to cremate the bodies of those who died in the camp and in the “showers.” I remember arriving to Auschwitz in another cattle train. It was so crowded once again. I stood for two hours in a line to have a shower, which I now know was the line to the infamous gas chamber. As the long line drew closer to the doors to go in for our “shower,” a Nazi officer was making last minute selections. If he said go to the left, you went into the shower room and died of the poisonous gases they released from the ceiling.

Of course, we were not aware of this at the time, but as he came to me, he told me to go to the right and get him a packet of cigarettes, which he said “Would save my life.” Quickly as I could, I looked and asked everyone in the camp for cigarettes. I miraculously found some cigarettes, and even had someone give me a new ID. How this ended up in my hand, I had no idea, but I took it and I hid it. No one had any ID’s. We were all numbers in their eyes. I was given 67435288. It had been tattooed on the inner side of my left upper forearm, as I went through selection soon after I arrived to Auschwitz.

Prisoners received tattoos only at one location, the Auschwitz camp complex. I got serial numbers which were sewn to my uniforms also. Only prisoners selected like me to go to the right for work were issued serial number tattoos, even against their will. Those prisoners sent directly to the gas chambers were not registered and received no tattoos. So, I gave the cigarettes to the officer, who then told me to come to the eastern gate at 10pm if I wanted to be free. I did not know if I should believe him. It sounded too

good to be true! It could be a trap, but I thought “What could I lose?” I arrived at 10:00 pm at the eastern gate like he told me, and by a miracle of God, he let me escape! Through a series of events and further miracles, I ran to the cattle train, the same train that brought me there. It was empty, preparing to go in the other direction to get some more Jews to bring back to the camp. I climbed in and hid on the empty train. It was cold and dark, and I was shivering.

Around midnight, a stranger jumped on and found me. He told to me that at 6:00am, the train will stop at Paderborn, a city in eastern north Germany, and I was to jump off and run for my life. He told me the Nazi officer had lied to me; he told them to look for me and arrest me. Right after the man delivered his message, he disappeared off the train. I have often wondered if he was a messenger from heaven. I stayed until the train stopped at 6am just like he said, then jumped and ran to the nearby port. There I showed them the ID I had been given in the camp and waited for there for four hours. Someone came out to the dock with a list and called some names. The people whose name they called would be put in a line to get on a boat to Haifa. More than 2000 names were on the list, but not all would get on as the boat, as it was small.

Finally, the name I had been given on the ID card was called! I was the last one on the list that could board the boat. As I ran up the bridge, they were pulling it up to the boat, and we took off to sea. I did not know where we were going, but we ended up in Haifa port, in what is now Israel. At the time, the British oversaw the territory and did not let us come near the shore. The soldiers yelled and shouted at us to go back. As the boat was turning around, the engine exploded. I believe the boat was shot by missile which caused the explosion. Many drowned right there. I swam to shore and was arrested by the British soldiers. They accused me of collaborating with the Nazis and put me in Atlit, essentially another work/detention camp, near Haifa. The only good thing about that camp was I met my future wife, Gertrude, while detained there. After our release a year and a half later, we got married, but our negative experiences continued to affect many of our generations to follow. For instance, my daughter Hannah was our second born child. She suffers from anti-Semitism, as a second-generation Holocaust survivor, still today.



She will hardly go out of her home, and she hoards food and other items.

As you can see, I know all about Anti-Semitism personally, because I have suffered greatly due to it. I witnessed one nationality of a people hate my people so greatly, they tried to wipe our existence off the face of the earth! Concentration camps of the Holocaust were the sites of some of the most horrific events known in history created by the Nazi regime, and I survived two of them! Just when I thought I had made it safely out of Germany, I found myself back again in another camp, this one the Atilt detainee camp established by the British. They locked us Jews up in their camp again due to their anti-Semitic mindsets and fear of people different than themselves. If we don't want to repeat the horrific tragedies of the past, we must remember them and be willing to change our hearts and attitudes, so no human being of any race, culture or religion will ever have to suffer like that again.



**HELIUM HEARTS - *Gretchen Lund***

*Watercolor*

When Daniella was seven, her mother died from a fatal brain tumor. This ultimately left her in the care of her father, a man she'd only met twice. He lived in a flat level home and drove a truck with giant tires and chipped paint. He watched a lot of television, mostly football, and liked sandwiches on white bread, not wheat. It was hard adjusting at first, especially since her room was painted an ugly brown and had carpet with mysterious stains. She mostly ate pizza delivery and french fries from McDonalds that first two weeks until she learned to cook for herself.

In the beginning, he appeared to be everything a father should be, not that she could distinguish the lines of normality. All she had ever known was her mother, lovely and comforting with little wrinkles around her eyes and happy lines around her mouth from smiling. She smelled of lavender and cinnamon, a vague scent that still clung to the old sweaters that Daniella kept inside a box by her nightstand. In contrast, her father was tall and quiet, always working and painfully distant. Sometimes he'd look at her funny, with a blank expression, as if the person he was observing was someone other than his child. Shortly after she had arrived, he stated that Daniella had his hair color and sturdy jaw but that her eyes were a duplicate of her mother's. She couldn't decipher if the similarities were a good thing or not.

They lived in an old neighborhood tucked away behind an open field, bare except for a few twisted oak trees and the overgrown remains of a crumbling cemetery. She had always felt safe in her backyard waiting with binoculars for a rabbit or deer to breach the maze of dry grass that sprouted beyond her head. Her father didn't hunt and for that she was glad. The animals around her home reminded her of times when she'd go on wilderness expeditions, the little yellow backpack strapped to her shoulders and her mother's palm pressed to her own.

Her father said the guns inside the hall closet were for protection, but Daniella didn't know what

there was to be frightened of. There were many things she did not understand, such as the strange red flags in the hallway- the one with a blue X and little stars, and the other one with a white circle and what resembled, to a seven-year-old, a black rubix cube inside. They weren't any flags that she knew; Daniella had learned the looks of most of those in school.

It became apparent that he considered anybody remotely different from himself as inferior. He often asserted that some people would unfortunately always deserve to wallow beneath those who were privileged enough to be members of the "superior race." When the topic was first inaugurated over a breakfast of Eggos, Daniella did not comprehend the meaning of his words. Perhaps he hadn't meant for her to. As she grew older, however, her knowledge of the world and its ways naturally expanded.

Soon enough she became aware of the divides her father preferred to create between himself and those around him. She observed the way he would not converse with the woman at Target whose skin tone did not match his own, and the way he frowned upon the teenage boy who could not feed himself without spilling at their favorite restaurant. Daniella absorbed every word, every glance, every action. Her chest ached for something to fill the vacancy left inside her heart, to cover the blank canvas she now was with color, and to resurrect the feelings of belonging and innocence that had never been questioned before. Her father was the only thing she had left to reach for, he was the only entity left in her mismatched world she could view as a sturdy role model.

By the time junior year of high school sprang before her, Daniella had been struggling to reciprocate her father's ideals for nine years. It had become a type of routine, cultivating herself into someone he would like, much like brushing one's teeth, except every time she found herself becoming a little more like him she found herself becoming a little less like her mother. That realization tore at her heart.

During that fall, Daniella's class drove the two hours from Virginia to The Holocaust Museum

in D.C. Before she'd left that day, her father had beckoned her back to the front door with a decisive holler of her name. "Remember what I told you." He had said, fingers wrapped around a steaming cup of coffee. "You usually can't trust history. All we know is what is now, happening to us, everything else is irrelevant."

Daniella recalled his words on the way there, and tried to for the remainder of the trip. For years her only surviving parent had told her repeatedly about the evils of the world, atrocities always caused by those who were disparate. He said the problem was in their DNA, as if the troublesome characteristics surged through their very bloodstream like venom. It was an arduous thing to deny what her eyes could see however, and with every step she took throughout that field trip the more nauseous she became. The walls were riddled with evidence, grainy shots of people who had suffered and died, all because one ugly little man gained enough power to dictate that they deserved to be dehumanized to the point of destruction. Daniella could not convince herself that the orphanage of children, smiling and laughing together, had deserved to have their pretty locks of hair shaved from their heads and the smooth skin of their wrists tattooed with crude numbers that took the place of their names. She could not look at the faces of people, just like herself, and accept that their suffering was justified.

By the end of the day Daniella dreaded the fact that soon they would all be back on the bus, headed home to their families and normal lives. Everyone else would be able to discuss what they had learned with sympathizing loved ones, but she knew deep down that she could not. The next thing she knew, Daniella had excused herself from the tour and was rushing towards the bathroom. She didn't want to breakdown where everyone could see, she needed to be somewhere confined by herself. Unfortunately, the women's restroom was being cleaned when she rounded the corner. The enclosed area she had entered was dimly lit, another exhibit of photographs and momentos. Daniella hovered absently there, breath shallow as her lungs constricted, her heart pounding as the anxiety kicked in.

She hadn't paid much attention to the photographs around her then, and hadn't meant to, but by chance one image caught her eye. It was of a smiling couple standing in front of a tidy looking house with what appeared to be their children and one grandchild; two girls, one boy, and a small baby in the arms of the shortest girl. The tallest of the daughters was strikingly familiar; wide smile, soft jaw, dark eyebrows, and most noticeably—her eyes. Daniella stepped closer, left hand reaching out to graze the glass with her fingertips. The eyes staring back were almond shaped, crinkled at the corners. The girl was a mirror image of Daniella's mother. Next to the photo there was a plaque that read: Joseph and Rosie Jacobs, with their three children: Daniel, Ruth (with baby), and Sara.

Nothing else was real in that moment, it seemed as if time had been turned backwards, and Daniella was once again a little girl gazing upon the face of the woman she loved more than life itself. It seemed as if, in that moment, something dormant had been awakened and for once in a very long while Daniella felt as if there was actual hope. Hope for what was the question, but it was there, touching her expanding heart with feelings of warmth and sudden determination. She was going to discover who Sara Jacobs was.

Daniella didn't have any known family members left besides her father. Her mother's history was shrouded in mystery, and her father's family tree had just as many blank places. When she was ten she'd found a baseball bat and a Yankees cap stuffed under the bed inside her dad's bedroom, they were dusty and had that old smell like the boxes in the garage. She had pulled the hat down over her eyes and struggled to grip the wooden bat, trying to imitate the professional players in front of his full-length mirror. Her father had walked in when she was attempting to swing. At first, she had started, afraid that he would be angry with her for getting into his stuff, but instead he smiled. It was a strange smile, almost bittersweet.

That day he had taken her to the nearby secondhand store and bought a baseball bat her size



along with a pack of bubblegum from the liquor store (he said she'd look more professional if she was chewing something). Then they went to the park by their house and practiced. If the sun hadn't started to set, they probably would have stayed out for hours. It had been one of the best days with her dad, and for once the longing for her mother had been somewhat subdued. After making root beer floats, father and daughter sat out on the porch and listened to the crickets. Unlike her mother, Daniella's father thought it was funny when she blew bubbles through her straw—he even blew some too.

It had been a nice day, but her curiosity had been sparked. Rocking in the porch chair, Daniella asked her father where he'd gotten the baseball hat that was still perched atop her tiny head. He told her it was his own father's, and that they use to play baseball together too. Daniella had realized that he was speaking in past tense. When she asked where her grandpa was, her father's demeanor had changed, as if he was recoiling into himself. Maybe she shouldn't have kept asking questions after he said that her grandfather was dead. Maybe he wouldn't have lurched up so suddenly and snatched the cap from her head. Maybe then she wouldn't have witnessed that side of her dad, red-faced and bleary-eyed, the one who didn't like to talk about anything that hurt.

Daniella's grandfather had been accused of shoplifting at a gas station, even though he swore he hadn't taken anything. He left but the man working there called the cops. Daniella's grandfather had made the mistake of running, even though he was innocent. Something happened, supposedly he had made a suspicious movement as if he had a gun, prompting one of the police officers to fire. The officer who fired the gun happened to be black, just as the gas station owner happened to be Jewish.

A week after the trip to D.C., Daniella's persistent search of the internet and yellow pages rewarded her with an address. She rode her bike an hour to get there and once she arrived, it was difficult not to turn around and go home. It was unrealistic to appear at someone's house, assuming that it was the

same Sara Jacobs, the Holocaust survivor that was supposedly still alive and living in Virginia. The house was decently sized with two stories, a small yard, and a white picket fence. Daniella stood for a good ten minutes outside the door bracing herself for the ice-breaking first knock. It was opened by a red-headed woman with a constellation of freckles across her face and neck. "Hello, are you here to see Sara?" She broached the question so frankly that Daniella was astounded and suddenly left without the ability to formulate a coherent response. She settled for a nod. The woman smiled warmly and ushered her inside, explaining that visitors were always welcomed and wanted. Sara enjoyed the socializing.

They soon entered the living room. It was cozy, with a fireplace and an assortment of seating arrangements positioned over a fluffy rug. There, sitting with her eyes closed, was the woman that Daniella had come to see. At that moment she found herself unable to move any closer, frozen to be exact, mostly by the dawning that she had actually located the person she had been searching for. The elderly woman was gently woken and did so with a smile, directing the welcoming expression towards Daniella. "Well what have we here?" She asked, straining to sit up farther in her chair. "A visitor I suppose? Have a seat dear, but move it closer so that I can see you clearer. There, that's it. What is your name?"

"Daniella Davis."

Sara raised an eyebrow, "My great-granddaughter Daniella Davis?"

The question took the breath out of Daniella's lungs. She had been right; the flicker of hope had led her somewhere after all. "My mother was Julia Davis."

"Then it is true." Sara mused, "Your mother told me before she passed that one day you would pay me a visit. I believe she left you a letter..."

"A letter?"

"Ah yes, I see. It would make sense that your father would keep that from you—it does not matter, all that matters is that you're here." She gave a contented sigh, settling back against the crocheted blanket

behind her shoulders. "I have a story to tell you, it's something your mother wanted you to know..."

Sara, was Joseph and Rosie Jacob's youngest child. They all lived together in Frankfurt, Germany. Out of the children Daniel was an artist who loved to draw and paint, Ruth played the piano, and Sara herself enjoyed writing little stories and plays. They were all talented, aspiring adolescents, who lived a happy, modest life. Ruth married a nice young man when she was nineteen and moved into a little place next door, giving birth to a baby girl two years later. Life was comfortable and good, not outstandingly privileged but safe. That all changed in a heartbeat.

At first, there were only restrictions, but soon the trucks came. The men knew where you lived and they knew who you were. They were rounding up families like cattle to be taken somewhere, where was uncertain.

The Jacobs swore that they would not allow themselves to be separated and they weren't. They all arrived at Auschwitz crammed together on the same train. For a while time seemed to stand still. The mornings became nights and the nights became mornings and so on, but then the children's father sprained his ankle terribly while out doing the grueling work they were forced to do. The Nazis said they were taking a group to "the showers." Unable to work, he was taken with them and never came back. Ruth's baby was taken with a group of other children and her husband was sent to another camp.

A group of the guards there liked Ruth to play the piano for them, so she did, gracefully. They wanted lighthearted melodies however, and once her baby was gone, the only music Ruth could play was melancholy. This angered one of the guards who promptly pressed his pistol to Ruth's temple and pulled the trigger.

Daniel would draw little pictures in the dirt with his fingers every day for Sara, as his paints and canvases had been taken along with all of their other belongings. But then he developed typhoid fever and Rosie wouldn't let her daughter see him for fear that she would get sick too. Daniel died and Sara

never got to say goodbye.

Then it was just Sara and her mother, alone together and barely alive. They hardly ate, worked more than they slept, and lost concept of time itself. Sara was young and strong, her body was able to hold on, but her mother's was slowly withering away with each day that faded past. Soon Rosie refused to eat with a vehemence. She tried to force the portions onto her daughter, who she believed would benefit from it more. She wanted nothing more than to have Sara walk out of Auschwitz and not be buried there when hope finally delivered a savior.

Rosie Jacobs died on a cold morning in the arms of her last remaining child. It was just before dawn, the first candy-colored streaks alighting the sky as the sun's rays burst forth over the distant horizon.

The remaining prisoners of Auschwitz were freed five days later. A kind soldier found Sara wrapped in a blanket riddled with holes, alive but silent. He attempted to carry the shivering and weak girl, but she refused. Forcing herself to stand on wobbly stick-like legs, Sara Jacobs walked out of the death camp alive.

When the elderly woman was finished with her story, she watched Daniella, who wiped at the tears trailing down her cheeks. Sara had tears of her own, shining at the corners of the eyes—eyes that Daniella had seen before. Reaching out a frail arm, tattooed on the wrist with faded ink, Sara grasped Daniella's hand with her own wrinkled one and squeezed. Palm to palm.







